

Appl. No. 09/220,223
Amdt. Dated October 7, 2005

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The present Preliminary Amendment is being filed together with a Request for Continued Examination (RCE).

By the present Preliminary Amendment each of the independent claims 1 and 9 have been amended to recite that thermoplastic synthetic fibers and pulp fibers are mixed with each other and entangled by subjecting a mixture of the thermoplastic synthetic fibers and the pulp fibers to high velocity water jet streams so as to have a basis weight of about 10 to 80 g/m² as a whole.

In addition, new claims 13 and 14 have been added which recite that the texture of mixture of thermoplastic synthetic fibers and pulp fibers is stabilized by subjecting the mixture to additional high velocity water jet streams before being subjected to entanglement.

Support for this stabilizing step which will occur before hydroentanglement and the forming of any protuberances is discussed in the paragraph bridging pages 6 and 7 of applicants' original specification.

Further new claims 15 and 16 have been added which recite that the protuberances are formed by subjecting the fabric to a pair of opposed embossing rolls provided on opposite sides of the sheet, so that the thermoplastic fibers are non-fused throughout the fabric, including throughout the protuberances.

Support for new claims 15 and 16 can be readily found in applicants' Fig. 3.

Entry of the changes to the claims is respectfully requested.

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Neither Anderson (who does not teach hydroentangling) nor Radwanski et al. teach such an initial step of stabilizing the texture of the mixture which results in the protuberances being formed by reorienting the fibers (from the stabilized state) rather than merely laying down unstabilized fibers.

Also, Anderson teaches an anvil rather than embossing rolls and Radwanski et al. does not teach embossing.

Applicants' process and the resulting structural stability of the nonwoven fiber are not at all taught or suggested by the prior art.

Entry of the present Preliminary Amendment and an early examination of the application are respectfully requested.

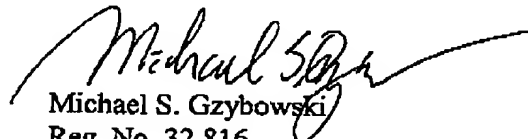
If upon consideration of the above, the Examiner should feel that there remain outstanding issues in the present application that could be resolved, the Examiner is invited to contact applicant's patent counsel at the telephone number given below to discuss such issues.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR §1.136 is hereby made. Please charge the fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of

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time fees, to Deposit Account No. 12-2136 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,


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